

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Greetings to fellow workers
behind bars

—PAGE 8

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 73/NO. 1 JANUARY 12, 2009

Pakistan gov't faces tough war on border

BY DOUG NELSON

After a yearlong effort, the U.S.-backed Pakistani military has made little progress in retaking control of Taliban strongholds in parts of the country's northwest. From these bases, Islamist forces launch guerrilla assaults against U.S., NATO, and Afghan troops in Afghanistan.

In other parts of the country, the Pakistani government has taken steps to crack down on more Islamist groups following last month's terrorist attack on civilians in Mumbai, India. The primary target is Lashkar-e-Taiba, the main organization implicated in the attacks in which some 170 people were killed, and one of many such groups that the Pakistani government has nurtured for years.

The United Nations Security Council passed a U.S.-backed resolution December 10 placing Lashkar-e-Taiba and four of its alleged leaders on a list of organizations that support al-Qaeda. Those on the list are subject to asset freezes, travel bans, and arms embargoes.

The resolution listed a charity group with substantial assets in Pakistan, Jamaat-ud-Dawa, as an alias for Lashkar-e-Taiba. Jamaat-ud-Dawa is headed by Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, a founder of Lashkar-e-Taiba. Saeed, who publicly disassociated himself from Lashkar-e-Taiba after the Pakistani government banned the organization in 2002, was one of those placed on the list.

The resolution was passed after the Pakistani ambassador to the United Nations

Continued on page 3

Troy Davis supporters oppose execution

BY JOHN BENSON

ATLANTA—A three-judge panel of the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals heard oral arguments December 9 on the appeal of Troy Davis, who was framed-up and convicted in 1991 for the murder of off-duty police officer Mark MacPhail in Savannah, Georgia.

The appeal is based on the fact that since the conviction enough evidence has been presented that a "reasonable juror" could find Davis not guilty. Seven of nine prosecution witnesses in the case have recanted their testimony.

The night before the hearing, supporters of Davis gathered outside the federal appeals courthouse in Atlanta. Speakers vowed to continue the fight to save Davis's life and overturn his conviction. The vigil was organized by Georgians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty and Amnesty International in Atlanta.

More than 200 people attended the hearing, filling the courtroom and another set aside for the overflow. The families of Mark MacPhail and of Troy Davis both attended.

Addressing the media after the hearing, Martina Correia, Davis's sister, pledged to keep fighting, not just for Troy, but for others like him who do not have people fighting for them. She pointed to a recent episode of the television show *Boston Legal*, which referenced Davis's case, as an example of the progress of the campaign to defend Davis. "Troy deserves his day in court," Correia said. She went on, "I hope the case illuminates what is wrong with the

Continued on page 8

Auto bailout: huge cutbacks for workers



AP/Paul Sancya

Workers leave Chrysler truck assembly plant in Warren, Michigan, December 12.

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The White House announced December 19 it was bailing out General Motors and Chrysler with \$17.4 billion in loans. The deal is premised on yet more steep concessions by auto workers to make these companies "more competitive." If this is not accomplished by March 31, government officials say, the funds must be returned and the companies will have

to file for bankruptcy.

The deal extends \$13.4 billion in loans to General Motors and Chrysler in December and January, with another \$4 billion in February. Ford is not seeking an immediate government loan.

"The automakers and unions must understand what is at stake," stated President George Bush in announcing this

Continued on page 3

U.S. troops to patrol in Iraqi cities beyond June deadline

BY BEN JOYCE

Washington will maintain troops in dozens of Iraqi cities beyond the June 30, their earlier deadline for ending patrols of city streets, Gen. Ray Odierno, the top U.S. commander there, said December 13.

The announcement comes just weeks after Washington and Baghdad adopted an agreement that extends

deployment of U.S. troops in Iraq until Dec. 31, 2011.

Though the "status-of-forces" agreement calls for troops to pull out of cities and towns by the end of June, Odierno said that some troops would remain at numerous outposts in Iraqi cities to help support and train Iraqi soldiers and cops. Counterinsurgency forces that fight alongside Iraqi troops are defined by the U.S. military as "training personnel." The general argued that no adjustments to the pact are necessary to do this.

Even the 2011 deadline for the full

Continued on page 8

Bosses lay off thousands of workers throughout Mexico

BY SETH GALINSKY

With 80 percent of its exports dependent on a rapidly contracting U.S. market, Mexico has been hard hit by a series of factory closings and layoffs. Mexico is Latin America's second largest economy after Brazil.

Ford, Chrysler, General Motors, Nissan Mexicana, and Volkswagen de México have all announced they are closing factories across Mexico for the next month or more—the first time they have ever done so. Honda and Toyota have said they do not plan to suspend production at this point.

The shutdowns will affect at least 20,000 workers, according to Mexican news reports. Many auto parts or auto-related factories are also laying off thousands.

Ford is laying off 600 workers at its

Cuautitlán plant for more than a year without pay, ostensibly to retool for future production of the Fiesta car.

Seventy percent of autos built in Mexico are sold in the United States, where demand has dropped as a result of the economic crisis. The auto and auto parts industry is a substantial part of Mexico's economy, accounting for about one-fifth of its manufactured exports and employing nearly 600,000 workers.

In October, for the sixth straight month, industrial production fell in Mexico. Mining fell 5.2 percent and construction by 2.9 percent. Computer manufacturing dropped more than 10 percent.

Pepsi Bottling Group recently announced it was closing three plants

Continued on page 7

Australia construction unions protest antistrike law

BY JOANNE KUNIAISKY

SYDNEY, Australia—In a national day of action called by construction unions, thousands of workers marched here and in seven other cities December 2 demanding that the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) be abolished.

The ABCC was put in place by the Liberal Party government of John Howard in 2005 to enforce the Building and Construction Industry Im-

Continued on page 8

Also Inside:

Students in Greece protest cop killing of youth	2
London students discuss Cuban Revolution	6
New Zealand: workers protest harassment of communist	6
D.C. public library features Cuban Five art exhibit	7

Students protest in Greece over cop killing of youth

BY BOBBIS MISAILIDES
AND NATASHA TERLEXIS

ATHENS, Greece—Some 10,000 people, mostly high school and university students, marched on Parliament here December 18 as part of a nationwide protest against the police killing of 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos. He was shot December 6.

Banners held by the students had slogans such as “Down with the government of blood, poverty, and privatizations!” In a display of force, riot police met the march with massive amounts of tear gas and stun grenades.

The protest was given further impetus by the shooting of a high school student in the hand the previous day by an unknown assailant. Another demonstration of 3,000 was held December 18 in the working-class suburb of Peristeri, where the latest incident occurred.

As of December 19, the number of high school occupations across the country has reached 800, while 200 universities have also been occupied. Thousands of high school and university students, teachers, and others marched to Parliament on December 12.

Among the most prominent demands of the protesters are that the cop who killed Grigoropoulos be prosecuted to the full extent of the law and that the police patrolling the streets be disarmed and the government resign.

Fueling the protests is discontent over the country’s educational system and the specter of unemployment that many feel awaits them at the end of their school years. “Money to the banks, bullets to young people, our time has come” was one of the main slogans chanted by youth

in the December 12 march, referring to the 28 billion euros to be given by the government to banks facing crisis.

The daily protests have included a general national strike called by the two union federations and a march of tens of thousands of workers and youth on December 10. The following day thousands of high school students participated in marches on 25 police stations.

Anger over police brutality was fueled further when the cop responsible for shooting Grigoropoulos claimed the youth was “a troublemaker.” The officer also claimed that he was attacked by a group of young people. Fearing for his life, he said, he shot his gun in the air



Militant/Natasha Terlexis

Students protest December 15 in Athens, Greece, against killing of youth by police.

and the bullet ricocheted before hitting Grigoropoulos. About a dozen eyewitnesses have stated that they saw the cop shoot the youth cold-bloodedly in the chest and that there was no group of

youth attacking the police.

On December 15, upwards of 3,000 high school students demonstrated at the main headquarters of the Athens police against the detention of 200 protesters.

‘Teamster Rebellion’ in Swedish launched

BY DAG TIRSÉN

STOCKHOLM, Sweden—A lively meeting to celebrate the publication in Swedish of the book *Teamster Rebellion* by Farrell Dobbs was held here December 6.

The book, published by Pathfinder Press, tells the story of the 1934 strikes in Minneapolis through which workers organized into the Teamsters union and helped pave the way for the rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations as a fighting social movement.

The meeting drew a variety of people interested in learning about the lessons of working-class struggles contained in the book. Among the 20 who participated were a group from the Somali Peace and Development Organization. They had been involved in a fight for the freedom of two leaders of their group ar-

rested on false charges of “aiding terrorism” and eventually released after four months of protests. Two of them are reading the book with great interest.

The meeting was chaired by Catharina Tirsén, editor of the Swedish-language translation of *Teamster Rebellion*. She stressed the timeliness of the new book as a tool for workers in the coming struggles at a time of deepening worldwide recession.

Tony Hunt, from the Communist League leadership in the United Kingdom, described the impact *Teamster Rebellion* had on him as a young worker involved in a strike in London. “A communist worker gave me a copy, which helped me understand a lot of what was happening in the fight I was involved in,” Hunt said, adding that others will have the same experience when they read the book.

Daniel Nordström, from the Young Socialists and the Communist League in Sweden, pointed to how the Teamsters battles in the 1930s forged a fighting union movement.

Tirsén noted the example of Carl Skoglund, one of the leaders of the Communist League in the United States—forerunner of the Socialist Workers Party—who helped lead these struggles. Skoglund, originally from Bengtsfors, Sweden, was an immigrant without legal papers who faced the threat of deportation by U.S. authorities.

Debbie Delange, a volunteer in the Printing Project in Manchester, England, told about the efforts of dozens of volunteers to produce the book in time for the European Social Forum, held in Malmö, Sweden, in September. Communist workers and Young Socialists from Sweden, Britain, Belgium, and the United States who participated in that event drew upon lessons from the book in discussions at the forum and explained a communist perspective.

A week later the book became a center of political discussions at the Pathfinder stand at the international book fair in Gothenburg, Sweden.

Also speaking on the December 6 panel was Paul Mailhot, from the Socialist Workers Party in the United States. He gave the audience a picture of the suddenness and severity of the economic downturn in the United States.

Mailhot stressed that having *Teamster Rebellion* in four languages now—English, Farsi, Spanish, and Swedish—means workers speaking different languages who find themselves in struggles of their own can study and absorb the class-struggle lessons of the Teamster battles and gain an understanding of the type of revolutionary leadership that was decisive in that fight.

Teamster Rebellion is the first of a four-volume series on the Teamster battles by Farrell Dobbs. The titles are available from Pathfinder Press.

THE MILITANT

Protest attacks on workers’ rights

From the Patriot Act and the expanded use of police spying and disruption to the domestic use of the U.S. military, the ‘Militant’ reports on attacks on workers’ rights and the need to oppose them.

Don’t miss a single issue!



Protesters in Houston oppose arrests by immigration cops.

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

NEW READERS

☐ \$5 for 12 issues

RENEWAL

☐ \$10 for 12 weeks

☐ \$20 for 6 months

☐ \$35 for 1 year

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ E-MAIL _____

UNION/SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION _____

CLIP AND MAIL TO THE MILITANT,
306 W. 37TH ST., 10TH FLOOR NEW YORK, NY 10018.

The Militant

Vol. 73/No. 1

Closing news date: December 23, 2008

Editor: Sam Manuel

Managing Editor: Martín Koppel

Business Manager: Angel Lariscy

Editorial volunteers: Róger Calero, Ved Dookhun, Seth Galinsky, Cindy Jaquith, Ben Joyce, Doug Nelson, Ben O’Shaughnessy

Published weekly except for one week in January and one week in July.

The Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018. Telephone: (212) 244-4899

Fax: (212) 244-4947

E-mail: themilitant@mac.com

Website: www.themilitant.com

Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: United States: For one year send \$35 to above address.

Latin America, Caribbean: For one year send \$85, drawn on a U.S. bank, to above

address.

Africa, Asia, and the Middle East: For one year send \$85 drawn on a U.S. bank to above address.

Canada: For one year send Canadian \$45 to the Militant, 7105 St. Hubert, Suite 106F, Montreal, Quebec. H2S 2N1.

United Kingdom: Send £25 for one year by check or international money order made out to CL London, First Floor, 120 Bethnal Green (Entrance in Brick Lane), London, E2 6DG, England.

Republic of Ireland and Continental Europe: Send £50 for one year by check or international money order made out to CL London at above address.

France: Send 76 euros for one year to Diffusion du Militant, P.O. Box 175, 23 rue Lecourbe, 75015 Paris.

Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark: Send 400 Swedish kronor for one year to Bildhuggarvägen 17, 12144 Johanneshov, Stockholm, Sweden.

New Zealand: Send NZ\$50 for one year to P.O. Box 3025, Auckland, New Zealand.

Australia: Send A\$50 for one year to P.O. Box 164 Campsie, NSW 2194, Australia.

Pacific Islands: Send NZ\$50 for one year to P.O. Box 3025, Auckland, New Zealand.

Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the Militant’s views. These are expressed in editorials.

Pakistan gov't war on border

Continued from front page

tions made clear that Islamabad would take action against Jamaat-ud-Dawa once it was added to the UN list.

Pakistani officials then placed Saeed under a three-month house arrest. They also sealed dozens of Jamaat-ud-Dawa offices, arrested scores of its members, and froze the group's assets. However, many facilities linked to Jamaat-ud-Dawa—which runs some 150 health-care centers, 8 hospitals, 160 schools, and 50 *madrassas*, or Islamic schools—remain open.

The Pakistani government officially banned Lashkar-e-Taiba in 2002 following a 2001 attack on the Indian parliament, which brought the two countries to the brink of war. However, the group continued to operate openly in areas of the country.

Following the Mumbai event, Islamabad also took steps against Jaish-e-Mohammad, another officially banned group accused of involvement in the 2001 attack on the Indian parliament. Pakistan defense minister Mukhtar Ahmed announced that Maulana Masood Azhar, founder and leader of Jaish-e-Mohammed, had also been placed under house arrest. However Pakistani ambassador to India Shahid Malik later said Azhar is not in Pakistani custody and no where to be found.

The Pakistani government has refused to hand over suspects arrested in the attack to the Indian government.

Lashkar-e-Taiba was founded at the end of the 1980s and had served Islamabad by providing fighters to the Himalayan territory of Kashmir, a majority Muslim area fought over between the governments of Pakistan and India. Lashkar-e-Taiba's stated goals are to spread boundaries of an Islamic state under Sharia law, and force non-Muslims to pay tribute. The Islamist's aim in the mass killing of Indians in Mumbai was likely to fuel sectarian violence between Muslims and Hindus and reignite armed conflict in Kashmir.

The Pakistani government has a long history of using reactionary Islamist movements to further the interests of the country's ruling class. The Islamizing of the Pakistani state was carried out by the country's military rulers, in part, as a counterweight to Baluchi and Pashtun nationalist movements on its soil. Later the Pakistani government established, funded, and armed Islamist fighters to extend its political influence in the re-

gion from Afghanistan to Kashmir.

Islamabad's policy of support for Islamist fighters had previously also served the interests of U.S. imperialism—which backed Mujahideen forces against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s—until the U.S. rulers began to consider the establishment of the Taliban government resulting from that course as a problem.

Under heavy pressure following Washington's invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the Pakistani government turned against al-Qaeda, elements of the Taliban, and other groups in the country. It launched a war against them in parts of Pakistan's northwest, predominantly Pashtun mountainous region. Civilians have been killed in the crossfire, and hundreds of thousands displaced as a result.

While Lashkar-e-Taiba is based in the populous eastern Punjab province in Pakistan bordering India, the Taliban is based in the Pashtun area, which spans the Afghan-Pakistan border. In Pakistan this includes the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, and northeast Baluchistan. The Pash-tuns are the dominant nationality in

Afghanistan, comprising 40 percent of the population.

Fight against Taliban

Top officials of the NWFP provincial government held a special cabinet meeting on security December 21 calling on the Pakistani government to conduct a “more effective” fight against the Taliban in Swat.

The Pakistani military made initial progress against the Taliban forces in the northern Swat region of the country's NWFP, where they launched a major offensive last year.

Beginning the second week in December, Taliban forces have carried out a series of assaults on NATO supply depots near Peshawar, the NWFP capital. The depots are part of the main route through Pakistan to supply U.S.-led NATO forces in Afghanistan. In two weeks, six attacks destroyed more than 300 military vehicles and supply trucks.

Sirajul Haq, the local leader of the



Jammat-e-Islami political party, encouraged Taliban attacks at a December 18 demonstration of thousands in Peshawar, reported the *Washington Post*. Many truck drivers are refusing to carry supplies along the route.

Lt. Cmdr. James Gater, a spokesman for NATO forces in Afghanistan, told AP, “There is no indication to us that there is a disruption to our supply lines at this stage.” At the same time, Gen. David Petraeus, head of U.S. Central Command, said the U.S. military is looking into alternative routes.

U.S. auto bailout: big cuts for workers

Continued from front page

decision. “The time to make the hard decisions to become viable is now—or the only option will be bankruptcy.” The move comes after both GM and Chrysler announced that they would run out of funds by the end of 2008.

Among the terms for the loan is that by the end of 2009 wages must be reduced and work rules made more “competitive” with those at the nonunion plants of Japanese car companies in the United States. Compensation or benefits will be halted for workers who have been fired, laid off, or furloughed.

At least half of company payments into the United Auto Workers (UAW) union health benefit fund will be made in stock shares. These pieces of paper normally become worthless when a company files for bankruptcy. In a little less than a year GM stock has declined 84 percent.

UAW president Ron Gettelfinger said he was disappointed that President Bush “added unfair conditions singling out

workers” in the bailout, but emphasized that he was pleased the administration had taken “emergency action.”

“This will keep the doors of America’s factories open. . . . All stakeholders—management, directors, bondholders, suppliers, dealers, workers—will have to participate in shared sacrifices to help the industry move forward,” Gettelfinger said.

Meanwhile, both GM and Chrysler have assembled teams of bankruptcy lawyers to prepare for the option of an “orderly” bankruptcy. “One increasingly discussed option on Capitol Hill,” reported the *Financial Times*, “would be to provide federal aid in conjunction with bankruptcy protection, since commercial banks could be unlikely to lend to companies in Chapter 11.”

Auto giants slash production

A few days prior to the bailout, GM and Chrysler announced major cuts in production during the first quarter of 2009. GM said it was idling 30 percent of its North American manufacturing capacity during the first quarter, building 250,000 fewer cars and trucks. Some 20 GM plants will also be shut for about a month “in one of the broadest shutdowns in the automaker’s history,” noted the *Times*. GM officials said assembly lines at three of its Mexican factories are also being temporarily closed (see front-page article on Mexico).

Chrysler shut all 30 of its U.S. factories for at least one month beginning December 19, laying off 46,000 workers. Two factories in Toledo, one in Detroit, and one in Canada are projected to be down longer. Auto sales at Chrysler fell 47 percent in November, compared to the same month a year earlier. Overall auto sales in the United States were down 37 percent that month.

Ford is halting production at all but two of its plants for an extra week in January. Toyota and Honda have also announced production cuts. In Europe, where auto sales are down 26 percent,

Volvo is halting work for 20 to 25 days in the first quarter of 2009. Spanish auto company Seat is also cutting production.

State and city cutbacks

As the contraction in capitalist production deepens, a growing number of state governments are slashing funds for social services vital to working people. Part of their scheme is reducing funds to cities, which in turn is leading to a new round of cuts by local authorities.

New York governor David Paterson’s latest budget includes cutting \$240 million that has been going to New York City. He is proposing 137 new or increased taxes and fees, most of which would fall hardest on working people. This includes an 18 percent levy on non-diet soft drinks, doubling taxes on beer and wine, and increased taxes on gas, cable TV, cigars, and license and registration fees for owning and operating a car.

Paterson’s plan would also eliminate a 3 percent wage raise for state workers, increase retiree contributions for health-care coverage, raise the minimum retirement age for newly hired state workers from 55 to 62, and cut \$700 million in education funds.

The state Metropolitan Transportation Authority voted December 17 to raise fares and tolls on New York bridges, buses, trains, and tunnels by an average of 23 percent. The cost of a single subway ride will increase to at least \$2.50. This goes into effect in June unless the legislature approves a different plan.

Officials say the extra revenue is needed to keep current on interest payments to wealthy bondholders. “We had a fiduciary responsibility to pass it,” Executive Director Elliot Sander told Bloomberg News. “If we did not pass a board budget, our credit rating on the bonds that we put out to finance our programs would probably be downgraded rather rapidly and it would have a direct financial impact.”

COME CELEBRATE 50 YEARS OF CUBA'S SOCIALIST REVOLUTION!

**Featured speaker:
Cuban Ambassador
to the United Nations**



**Wednesday,
December 31
8 p.m.–2 a.m.**

**\$20 admission (includes food)
At the Crystal Room, Taino Towers
240 E. 123rd St., New York City**

Sponsors: Casa de las Américas and others

Proceeds go to Hurricane Relief for Cuba Fund

For tickets or info: cuba.50th.anniversary@gmail.com

(347) 371-9724 or (212) 629-6649



Capitalism's long-term deflationary crisis

Printed below are excerpts from two presentations that explain how the worldwide economic crisis—which today is sharply accelerating—is rooted in the workings of the capitalist system itself. The first piece is from the book *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*, by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party. It is from a talk Barnes gave to a regional socialist educational conference in Los Angeles at the opening of 1995 titled “So Far From God, So Close to Orange County: The Deflationary Drag of Finance Capital.” It discusses the collapse of the Mexican peso in late 1994 and the bond default and subsequent bankruptcy filing around the same time by the government of wealthy Orange County in Southern California. Copyright © 1999 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

The second excerpt is from issue 12 of *New International*, a magazine of Marxist politics and theory. Titled “Capitalism's Long Hot Winter Has Begun,” it is a report given by Barnes to delegates at the SWP national convention in July 2002. Copyright © 2005 by New International. Reprinted by permission.

BY JACK BARNES

The world capitalist economy has entered a long-term deflationary crisis, a contraction that cannot be fundamentally reversed by the ups and downs of the business cycle. With their profit rates under long-term pressure, the capitalists are in their “lean and mean” period, their “just-on-time” period, their “downsizing,” “computerizing,” and “de-layering” period. They are laying off workers and other employees, speeding up production, and raking in short-term cash in the bargain.

But the one thing the capitalists are not doing, and are incapable of doing, is expanding productive capacity to anywhere near the degree they need to fuel another



Unemployed workers at Miami employment office November 20. Mounting joblessness today is rooted in capitalists' inability to expand productive capacity “anywhere near enough to fuel another gigantic boom,” says Barnes.

gigantic boom, set industrial profit rates on a long-term upward course, and accelerate capital accumulation. Even as capitalists temporarily boost their returns by cutting costs and taking a bigger slice of market share away from their rivals, the long-run profit expectations of capital are such that they are still not investing in new plant and equipment that draws more and more workers into expanded production.

The money that is going into new equipment goes largely into ways to make us work faster to produce more with fewer coworkers. That does not expand productive capacity, however. It intensifies speedup and extends the workweek. But that alone does not create the basis for the rising profit rates and capital accumulation that marked the post-World War II capitalist boom until it began running out of steam by the early 1970s.

In fact, instead of issuing stock to finance expansion—the classic source of “capital formation” extolled in standard economics textbooks—U.S. corporations for most of the 1980s and 1990s have actually bought more previously offered stock from each other than they have issued in new shares. Capitalists have also issued large quantities of high-interest corporate bonds—gone deep into debt, in other words—to finance takeovers and buyouts.

So, the world's propertied families have been fighting among themselves more and more to use credit to corner a bigger cut of the surplus value they collectively squeeze from working people. They have been blowing up great balloons of debt. But ever since the 1987 stock market panic, and at an accelerated pace since the onset of world depression conditions at the opening of the 1990s, the capitalists have been plagued by the problem that first one balloon, then another, and then yet another begins to deflate. And they have no way of knowing which balloon will go next until they start hearing the “whoosh,” and by then it is often too late.

All of us were children once and have blown up balloons. They can expand very slowly, very gradually. But then try to let the air out. That is harder to control. Remember? The balloons can get away and ricochet all over the room.

With returns on investments in capacity-expanding plant and equipment under pressure since the mid-1970s, owners of capital have not only been cost cutting; the holders of paper have been borrowing larger and larger amounts to buy and sell various forms of paper securities at a profit. They blew up a giant balloon of debt in Orange County over a period of years; the bondholders thought they had died and gone to heaven. Then the balloon began to deflate, as they learned

the hard way that interest rates go up as well as down. When the balloon international bankers had inflated in Mexico in the 1980s began to collapse, the bondholders stepped in and blew it back up for a while. But in Orange County, the more local officials borrowed to make a killing using public funds to gamble with bond merchants, the greater their vulnerability became. Earlier this year, when rates started rising and low-interest bond issues were suddenly no longer available, the moment of truth arrived.

Now the capitalists and their public representatives—and not just in Mexico or Orange County—have been given another warning of the long-run possibilities of an uncontrollable deflation.

Over the past couple of decades, upturns in the business cycle have relied on floating large amounts of fictitious capital—ballooning debt and other paper values. The capitalists are now paying the piper for the lack of sufficient economic growth during that period to keep rolling over the loans.



Only a couple of participants at this convention, those close to eighty years old, have lived, as political people, through a world depression. Some of us have experienced two or three deep-going slumps since the mid-1970s. In one or another of these downturns stock prices dropped sharply over a number of years, unemployment shot into double digits in several imperialist countries, and there were sudden bursts of inflation. That's different, however, from a deflation of such magnitude that the financial backbone of world capitalism—its debt structure and dominant financial institutions—buckles, production plummets, long-term joblessness spreads worldwide, and the great mass of humanity is hit by economic contraction or bouts of ruinous price explosions—sometimes both together. Masses of people lose faith in capitalism, but at first they just lose hope. Conditions of that kind, which have stalked the most vulnerable parts of the colonial world over the past decades, will become widespread and devastating. We're not predicting such a

Continued on page 8

For further reading

Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium

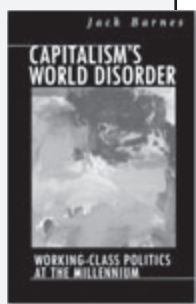
by Jack Barnes

The social devastation, financial panics, political turmoil, police brutality, and military assaults accelerating all around us are not chaos. They are the inevitable product of lawful and understandable forces unleashed by capitalism. —\$24

New International no. 12

by Jack Barnes

Today's sharpening interimperialist conflicts are fueled both by the opening stages of what will be decades of economic, financial, and social convulsions and class battles, and by the most far-reaching shift in Washington's military policy and organization since the U.S. buildup toward World War II —\$16



Available from
www.pathfinderpress.com
or contact distributors on page 5

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



January 20, 1984

Since early December, the racist white minority regime of South Africa has been conducting a new—and massive—invasion of Angola.

Striking hundreds of miles into that independent, Black-ruled country, South African air and ground forces have inflicted heavy damage and taken hundreds of lives. But they have also met with stiff Angolan resistance.

Angola, which has heroically stood up to repeated South African aggressions over the years, is again confronting the full power of the apartheid regime's military might. While Washington claims to favor “peace” in southern Africa, it has consistently sought to shore up the apartheid regime's position, provide it with the means to carry out its attacks against neighboring countries, and politically justify invasions like the one in Angola.



January 5, 1959

DETROIT—An agreement reached Dec. 19 ended the strike of 7,100 Dodge Main plant workers, members of Dodge Local 3, United Auto Workers. The strike lasted 18 days.

It took place primarily over conditions in Department 76—the body shop. Past practice over some 20 years called for the lines to shut down ten minutes every hour because of fumes, heat, heavy labor and generally hazardous and difficult jobs such as welding and soldering.

In early 1957, in one of the company's speed-up drives the relief time was cut in half to five minutes each hour. Last January another speed-up was instituted, and the relief time was cut to 12 minutes in the morning, and 12 minutes in the afternoon.

Because workers resisted new work quotas, they were sent home after one or two hours of work per day.



January 6, 1934

The unemployed seamen of New York are subjected to severe ill treatment and abuse down in the Seamen's Institute.

If a seaman comes ashore and applies for a cheap bed at the Institute's dormitory, the first question asked there by the clerk is “Have you got money?” Then he is grilled about his credentials as a bonafide seaman, when and where born, citizen or not, mother's maiden name, religion, what companies sailed on and, finally, the clerk takes a deep smell of the applicant's breath.

The seamen today are in a very desperate mood and are looking with anxiety toward a militant organization. Whether such an organization will come and take the initiative in the coming struggles of the seamen, depends upon the active seamen, who are themselves unorganized as yet.

Testimony in socialists' lawsuit against FBI spying

Below is an excerpt from FBI on Trial: The Victory in the Socialist Workers Party Suit against Government Spying, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for December. In July 1973 the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance filed a lawsuit against the FBI, CIA, and other government agencies, charging them with decades of illegal spying and harassment. The trial opened in April 1981. Five years later U.S. District Judge Thomas Griesa ruled in favor of the plaintiffs. The excerpt quoted here is from testimony presented at the trial by Jack Barnes, SWP national secretary. Margaret Winter was chief counsel for the SWP. Copyright © 1988 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

MARGARET WINTER: Mr. Barnes, I hand you the copies of the Constitution of the United States and the Declaration of Independence.

Does the Socialist Workers Party believe that their ideas are consistent with the philosophy underlying the United States Constitution?

JACK BARNES: Yes, in the sense that



Roberto Mercado

Picket line in New York April 21 protests FBI harassment of Puerto Rican independence fighters. Under guise of fighting "terrorism," U.S. rulers today are expanding use of FBI and other police agencies against struggles by working people.

a republican form of government—in the sense of a rule of law, which has elected officials that govern—is the only possible basis for socialist democracy, for the extension of democracy, as counterposed to any authoritarian and totalitarian mode of functioning.

That philosophy is similar to the philosophy of those who held that in the writing of the Constitution. . . .

I am especially saying yes in the sense of taking the Constitution as amended with the Bill of Rights, with the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments, the amendments on the franchise, on the poll tax and so forth, all of which substantially in our opinion democratize the Constitution. Some took mighty struggles. Three took a civil war of the most horrible kind to accomplish.

Without an extension of those conquests all talk about socialism is a mockery.

But the answer has to also be no in this sense. The Constitution was written with the philosophy which did not see a contradiction between the republican forms and checks and balances of the Constitution and chattel slavery for millions of human beings; for property requirements for

the electorate; for the lack of franchise for more than half the population, female half, until the twentieth century; for no rights for the original native residents of the continent; the original absence of the Bill of Rights itself; the absence of even direct elections of senators; and a number of things like that.

But to that degree the philosophy is in contradiction completely with the philosophy of Marxism, which would define a workers' and farmers' republic, our concept of democracy, as being combined in a constitution which would be in contradiction to chattel slavery, property requirements, restrictions of franchise for any reason of sex or age or anything like that. It would also include the fact that the prerogatives of the largest property owners, the largest productive property owners, the owners of the big mines, mills, and factories would be subordinate to the development and extension of the democratic rights of the great majority of the citizenry.

In some ways maybe the Civil War is the best example of this—the blood that was necessary to eliminate chattel slavery and get the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amend-

ments. But the fact it took until 1964 to get the poll tax to be unconstitutional and 1965 to, by law, guarantee the franchise without any restrictions because of anything to do with color to the adult citizens of the American South—

JUDGE GRIESA: Look, I respect those views, you know. I mean we are really not here debating about slavery or anything like that and let's bring this to a close.

BARNES: All right.

The yes and no can be indicated maybe in one other thing. That's the evolution toward greater and greater concentration of executive power, which has been a tremendous change since the drafting of the Constitution and the original first ten amendments. We feel there is a growing contradiction from even the constitutional viewpoint—talking politically, not as a lawyer—between executive decision, orders, even up to a declaration of war and the total protections guaranteed by the amendments to the Constitution.

WINTER: Mr. Barnes, I hand you a copy of a book called *Democracy and Revolution* by George Novack put out by Pathfinder Press.

Does this book set forth the Socialist Workers Party's views on the relationship of democracy, the Constitution, and socialism?

BARNES: Yes. In view of the questions of the court on this topic the last week, I tried to find a single book that was written and printed well before the litigation which captured the views of the Socialist Workers Party on the question of the Republican form of government, democracy, the Constitution, and how the fight in defense of democracy connects with the fight for socialism.

This is the single book that collects the views of the SWP on these questions, buttressed by our views on the rise of democracy going back to the first known examples I think in the rise of the republican form of government.

WINTER: We could offer [this book as evidence], your Honor.

GRIESA: Received.

IF YOU LIKE THIS PAPER, LOOK US UP

Where to find distributors of the *Militant*, *New International*, and a full display of Pathfinder books.

UNITED STATES

CALIFORNIA: Los Angeles: 2826 S. Vermont Ave. #9 Zip: 90007. Tel: (323) 737-2191. E-mail: laswp@sbcglobal.net **San Francisco:** 5482 Mission St. Zip: 94112-1015. Tel: (415) 584-2135. E-mail: swpsf@sbcglobal.net

FLORIDA: Miami: 6777 NW 7th Ave., Suite 5. Zip: 33150. Mailing address: P.O. Box 381395. Zip: 33238. Tel: (305) 757-8869. E-mail: swpmiami@att.net

GEORGIA: Atlanta: 2840 NE Expressway, Suite 102. Zip: 30345. Tel: (404) 471-1165. E-mail: swpatlanta@bellsouth.net

ILLINOIS: Chicago: 3557 S. Archer Ave. Zip: 60609. Tel: (773) 890-1190. E-mail: Chicagoswp@sbcglobal.net

IOWA: Des Moines: 3707 Douglas Ave. Zip: 50310. Tel: (515) 255-1707. E-mail: swpdesmoines@qwestoffice.net

MASSACHUSETTS: Boston: 13 Bennington St., 2nd Floor, East Boston. Zip: 02128. Tel: (617) 569-9169. E-mail: swpboston@verizon.net

MINNESOTA: Minneapolis: 1311 1/2

E. Lake St. Zip: 55407. Tel: (612) 729-1205. E-mail: tcswp@qwestoffice.net

NEW JERSEY: Newark: 168 Bloomfield Ave., 2nd Floor. Zip: 07104. Tel: (973) 481-0077. E-mail: swpn Newark@optonline.net

NEW YORK: Manhattan: 306 W. 37th St., 10th Floor. Zip: 10018. Tel: (212) 629-6649. E-mail: newyorkswp@mac.com

PENNSYLVANIA: Philadelphia: 188 W. Wyoming Ave. Zip: 19140. Tel: (215) 455-2682. E-mail: philaswp@verizon.net

TEXAS: Houston: 4800 W. 34th St., Suite C-51A. Zip: 77092. Tel: (713) 688-4919. E-mail: swp.houston1@sbcglobal.net

WASHINGTON, D.C.: 3717 B Georgia Ave. NW, Ground Floor. Zip: 20010. Tel: (202) 536-5080. E-mail: swp.washingtondc@verizon.net

WASHINGTON: Seattle: 5418 Rainier Ave. South. Zip: 98118-2439. Tel: (206) 323-1755. E-mail: seattleswp@speakeasy.net

AUSTRALIA

Sydney: 1st Flr, 3/281-287 Beamish St., Campsie, NSW 2194. Mailing address: P.O. Box 164, Campsie, NSW 2194. Tel: (02) 9718 9698. E-mail: cl_australia@optusnet.com.au

CANADA

QUEBEC: Montreal: 7105 St. Hubert, Suite 106F, H2S 2N1. Tel: (514) 272-5840. E-mail: clc_can@bellnet.ca

FRANCE

Paris: P.O. 175, 23 rue Lecourbe. Postal code: 75015. Tel: (01) 40-10-28-37. E-mail: milpath.paris@laposte.net

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland: Suite 3, 7 Mason Ave., Otahuhu. Postal address: P.O. Box 3025. Tel: (9) 276-8885. E-mail: clauk@xtra.co.nz

SWEDEN

Stockholm: Bildhuggarvägen 17, 12144 Johanneshov. Tel: (08) 31 69 33. E-mail: kfstockholm@tele2.se

UNITED KINGDOM

ENGLAND: London: First Floor, 120 Bethnal Green (Entrance in Brick Lane). Postal code: E2 6DG. Tel: 020-7613-2466. E-mail: clondon@onetel.com

SCOTLAND: Edinburgh: Second Floor, 105 Hanover St. Postal code: EH2 1DJ. Tel: 0131-226-2756. E-mail: cledinburgh@talktalk.net

December **BOOKS OF THE MONTH**

PATHFINDER READERS CLUB SPECIALS

25% DISCOUNT

FBI on Trial
by Margaret Jayko
The 1987 victory in the 14-year legal battle by the Socialist Workers Party against the FBI, CIA, and other government spy agencies. How this increases the confidence of working people that you can be political and hold the deepest convictions against the government and it's your right to do so and act upon them. \$18.95. **Special price: \$14**

Is Biology Woman's Destiny?
by Evelyn Reed
\$4.50. **Special price: \$3**

Teamster Bureaucracy
by Farrell Dobbs
How the class-struggle Teamsters leadership in the Upper Midwest organized to fight union-busting, racism, colonial oppression, and U.S. imperialist war aims in World War II. How Washington—backed by top AFL, CIO, and Teamster officials—acted to gag class-conscious workers. \$19. **Special price: \$14**

The Logic of Marxism
by George Novack
\$15. **Special price: \$11**

Che Guevara: Economía y política en la transición al socialismo (Che Guevara: Economics and Politics in the Transition to Socialism)
by Carlos Tablada
\$20. **Special price: \$15**

Join Pathfinder Readers Club for \$10 and receive discounts all year long

ORDER ONLINE AT
WWW.PATHFINDERPRESS.COM
OFFER GOOD UNTIL DECEMBER 31, 2008

Students at London event discuss Cuban Revolution, China, world politics

BY JULIE CRAWFORD

LONDON—"Is the Cuban Revolution an example for others?" asked a student. She was one of 15 Chinese youths among the 30 students at the London School of Economics who attended a December 10 seminar here. The event, one of a series hosted by university student group the China Development Society, heard a presentation on the book *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*, published by Pathfinder Press.

Li Ang, a statistics undergraduate who is president of the China Development Society, said the book, "through the accounts of three Chinese-Cuban generals, tells the little-known story of Chinese immigration to Cuba, and of the Cuban Revolution.

Li showed a clip of an award-winning film by Loni Ding, *Coolies, Sailors and Settlers*, about Chinese immigration to the Americas. He then introduced Jonathan Silberman of Pathfinder Books in London.

Silberman noted the interest the subject of *Our History Is Still Being Written* has sparked. "There have been some 60 meetings in seven countries around this book, involving over 4,000 participants," he said.

This was one of the first such meetings that also celebrated the recent publication of a Chinese-language edition in Beijing. Silberman quoted from the afterword written by Wang Lusha, who translated the book—originally published in English and Spanish—into Chinese.

"Wang recounts the anti-Chinese racism he encountered when living abroad. Such racism is rife in the United Kingdom," Silberman said. He pointed to the ongoing resistance to the "subminimum wage and life-threatening work conditions of tens of thousands of undocumented Chinese immigrants." The students groaned in recognition on hearing Wang's confession that at first, in the face of the prejudice he encountered, he almost felt ashamed to be Chinese.

"One man made me change my opinion," Wang writes. It was Moisés Sío Wong, one of the three generals interviewed in the book, from whom Wang learned about the role played by the Chinese-Cubans not as victims but as actors, the "people from nowhere" who, surprising the capitalist rulers, helped

make the Cuban Revolution.

A lively question-and-answer period followed the presentation. "In China there is a growing gap between the new superrich and ordinary people—is this also true in Cuba?" asked one student. "Can you explain the changes in the Cuban government's relations with China, from the time of Mao to today, especially in the field of foreign policy?" asked another. A third asked about Cuba's response to recent natural catastrophes. A fourth asked if "market socialism" would help to develop Cuba's economy.

Silberman said there is a revolutionary leadership in Cuba, which turns to working people to resolve the country's economic and social problems. The leadership is seeking to organize working people to boost food production, in order to reduce the continued dependence on food imports and to raise living standards.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the resulting end of the favorable economic agreements Cuba had with that government precipitated a deep economic crisis in Cuba in the early 1990s, Silberman explained. In response, the Cuban government had to expand trade with the capitalist world. But it did so "while maintaining free education and health care, and raising pensions and the minimum wage."

New Zealand: workers protest harassment of Communist League leader by customs agents

BY MIKE TUCKER

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—More than 260 workers, union officials, and supporters of workers' rights have signed an open letter by Annalucia Vermunt, a leader of the Communist League in New Zealand. The letter protests the actions of customs officials at Auckland International Airport who detained, interrogated, and strip-searched Vermunt November 17.

Vermunt has been a Communist League candidate in a number of election campaigns, most recently running for Parliament in November national elections. A meat worker and active unionist, she has been involved for two decades in political campaigns for Maori rights, women's rights, and other working-class struggles.

More than 90 fellow meat workers working in Otahuhu, Auckland, have signed Vermunt's letter. Other signers include trade union officials, academics, Maori rights campaigners, and representatives of political organizations.

Vermunt was detained at customs for more than four hours when returning to Auckland from Australia. After twice interrogating her, searching her bags and taking swabs, officials found no evidence of narcotics or contraband. Despite this, she was forced to undergo a strip search. Then officers continued to detain Vermunt and subjected her to a third interrogation, demanding that she answer questions about her political activity as a leader of the Communist League.

Vermunt's letter, addressed to the



Militant/Debra Jacobs

London School of Economics student Li Ang (right) chairs December 10 seminar presented by Jonathan Silberman (left) on Pathfinder book *Our History Is Still Being Written*.

Under these conditions, "there has been a growth in unequal living standards, largely based on differential access to foreign currency, which the government is seeking to address," Silberman said. "But in Cuba there are no private owners of factories, no private employers allowed to employ wage labor, and no billionaire property owners in town or country."

Silberman remarked that one of the early acts of the Cuban Revolution was to recognize the People's Republic of China. The Batista dictatorship had refused to recognize the Chinese revolution and considered Taiwan the "government" of China.

For a quarter of a century, with the beginning of the Sino-Soviet rift in the mid-1960s, Silberman said, China's relations with Cuba were almost nonexistent. He pointed to Havana's opposition to the Chinese army's invasion of Viet-

nam in 1979 and Beijing's support for the U.S.-backed Pinochet dictatorship in Chile. The two governments also took opposite positions in Angola following the invasion of that country by the apartheid regime of South Africa.

"The Chinese government supported Jonas Savimbi and Holden Roberto," added an international relations student, referring to the leaders of two U.S.-backed Angolan groups that backed the apartheid regime's invasion of Angola.

Relations between Cuba and China have improved since then, Silberman said. "Cuban medical personnel were welcomed in China to engage in voluntary work following the terrible earthquake earlier this year," he noted. There is expanding trade between the two countries. But there is no evidence the Cuban leadership is following the course of reliance on capitalist methods that is prevalent in China," he said.



Militant/Baskaran Appu

Annalucia Vermunt (left) campaigns as Communist League candidate in October at meat-packing plant in Auckland, New Zealand.

ministers of immigration and customs, demands that such harassment cease. Vermunt was detained and similarly questioned by customs officials at the Christchurch airport in 2005 and 2006.

National Radio interviewed Vermunt November 18, along with several of those who had endorsed her letter. These included Matt McCarten, national secretary of the Unite union; Robert Reid, national president of the National Distribution Union; and Catherine Delahunty, a Green Party member of Parliament. "It is not acceptable" for customs to question people about their political activity, said Delahunty.

In a press statement released the previous day, Vermunt noted, "What happened to me is an illustration of how increased powers being granted to police, immigration, and customs will be and

are being used to target working-class activists and political dissent."

Using the banner of fighting "terrorism," the New Zealand Parliament has adopted a raft of legislation over the past decade to widen police powers of surveillance and detention and to curtail democratic rights. This includes beefing up the powers of the border police.

Vermunt pointed out that the first use of "antiterrorism" laws in New Zealand had been police raids on Oct. 15, 2007, targeting Maori rights supporters. Although forced to back down from terrorism charges in the face of protests, police are prosecuting firearms charges against 17 of those arrested. Five have been hit with additional charges of "participating in a criminal gang."

Vermunt also noted the revelation in the media December 14 of a nearly 10-year operation by a police informer infiltrating political groups and spying on union activities. The fink was paid by the Special Investigation Group, an "antiterrorist" police outfit. Vermunt and the Communist League were among those spied on by the informer.

"It is important that every violation of our rights, such as happened to me at the airport, is met with a response," Vermunt said. "That's why it is significant that so many have joined me in submitting this open protest letter."

Vermunt's lawyer has written to the ministers of immigration, customs, and the Security Intelligence Service, demanding that they release all information they hold on file on Vermunt.

Our History Is Still Being Written

The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution

Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong—three young rebels of Chinese-Cuban ancestry—threw themselves into the great proletarian battle that defined their generation. —\$20

Also available in Spanish and Chinese

WWW.PATHFINDERPRESS.COM

Layoffs in Mexico

Continued from front page

and 30 distribution centers and laying off 2,200 workers. Aluminum producer Alcoa is laying off 500.

Mexico, the world's sixth largest oil producer, is also being affected by the drop in the price of crude. State-owned Pemex accounts for just 10 percent of Mexico's export revenue, but one-third of government income.

Applications for jobless benefits in Mexico have increased every month since June, according to government figures. Although unemployment is officially at 4.5 percent, these figures are understated, just as in the United States. The real figure is at least 10 percent, according to a report by the Coalition of Workers of the National Institute for Statistics, Geography, and Data.

By government criteria, anyone who works even one or two hours a week is considered employed, as well as vendors selling CDs on the Mexico City subway or teenagers washing car windshields at stoplights. Millions in the "informal economy"—including those who are hired off the books or scrape by through selling merchandise or services on their own—are not registered with the Mexican Social Security Institute and not included in official unemployment figures.

Peso takes a 'bungee jump'

In what the *Economist* magazine called a "bungee jump," the value of the Mexican peso relative to the U.S. dollar lost a quarter of its value to a record low of 14 pesos to the dollar in October. While this is less than the 40 percent drop during the peso crisis of 1994, the Mexican currency is now at 13 pesos to the dollar, compared to 10 to the dollar in late 1998.

In an attempt to shore up its value, the Mexican government has spent more than \$15 billion to buy back pesos. Mexico is among the top 20 countries with the highest foreign currency reserves.

The peso's fall has pushed up inflation to an annual rate of 6.2 percent by early December—the highest in seven years. But the cost of the "basic food basket"—25 products including meat, eggs, rice, beans, and tortillas—skyrocketed even higher. In Mexico City basic staples rose by 60 percent in the first 10 months of the year.

Starting on Jan. 1, 2009, the legal

minimum wage, which does not apply to "informal" workers, will rise a mere 4.6 percent to no more than 54.8 pesos—US \$4.15—a day.

The Mexican government reports it spent more than \$15 billion in hard currency to import food from January to September, a 28 percent increase from 2007.

More than \$1.8 billion went to importing white corn for making tortillas. Imports of U.S. corn, mostly yellow corn, have increased more than eight-fold since before January 1994, when the North American Free Trade Agreement was implemented, breaking down many protective trade barriers. On Jan. 1, 2008, the Mexican government lifted all remaining tariffs on corn, sugar, and powdered milk from the United States.

On average, one acre of land in the United States yields three times more corn than in Mexico due to higher mechanization, irrigation, and fertilizer use. Without tariff protection, thousands more Mexican peasants will be driven off the land.

The pace of immigration from Mexico has slowed somewhat over the last two years due to a combination of fewer jobs and more deportations and immigration restrictions in the United States. Six people per 1,000 inhabitants left Mexico for the United States in 2008, compared to 9.2 in 2007 and 10.5 in 2006, according to Mexico's national statistics agency. A small number of the estimated 10 million

New Zealand garment workers demand pay raise



Militant

WELLINGTON, New Zealand—Workers from the Rembrandt Suits factory in the Naenae neighborhood here held a picket December 6 outside the Kirkcaldie and Stains store to demand higher wages. The store sells Rembrandt-manufactured men's suits.

Twenty-five sewers and other members of the National Distribution Union, mostly women, and supporters gathered to draw attention to the company's miserly offer of an hourly increase of 24 cents. Workers said they are presently paid NZ\$12 (US\$6.90), the legal minimum wage, regardless of how many years they have worked there.

The picketers handed out leaflets to passersby and held signs stating, "Rembrandt Suits pay sweatshop wages" and "Suits=\$995, wages=\$12 an hour." Ese, a worker who has been at the factory for 13 years, told the *Militant* she is concerned about layoffs. Many workers were laid off in June, she said, and there have been more layoffs in December.

—CHRISTINE BERESFORD

Mexicans who work in the United States have decided to return to Mexico for now.

"You think, 'I used to earn \$600 a week and now I'm getting half of that a week?'" Daniel Ramírez, a construction worker laid off in Denver in

August, told the Associated Press. He decided to move back to San Luis Potosí in central Mexico.

Immigrant workers' remittances to their families have dropped. In August \$1.9 billion was sent to Mexico, a 12 percent drop from August 2007.

D.C. public library features Cuban Five art exhibit

BY SUSAN LAMONT

WASHINGTON—About 90 people filled the second-floor lobby at the main Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library here December 17 for an evening of art, poetry, and music in support of the effort to free five Cuban revolutionaries unjustly imprisoned in this country for the past 10 years.

Cuba solidarity activists, students, workers, visitors to the library, staff from the Cuban Interests Section, and others attended the reception for an exhibit of drawings, paintings, and poetry by Antonio Guerrero on display at the library.

The exhibit, lasting through the end of December, is called "From My Altitude," the title of a collection of poetry by Guerrero that has been published in both Spanish and English.

Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernán-

dez, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, and René González, also known as the Cuban Five, have been locked up in U.S. prisons since their arrest by FBI agents in 1998. The five Florida residents had been monitoring right-wing Cuban American counter-revolutionary groups who have a record of organizing bombings and other murderous attacks on Cuba from U.S. soil with Washington's complicity.

In a 2001 trial marked by violations of constitutional rights, the five men were convicted and given long sentences on frame-up charges that included conspiracy to commit espionage, failure to register as foreign agents, and—in the case of Hernández—conspiracy to commit murder. Guerrero, Hernández, and Labañino are serving life sentences. Fernando González was sentenced to 19 years

in prison and René González to 15 years.

The event was chaired by longtime Cuba solidarity activist Shirley Pate, who began the program by reviewing the history of the case. Yanet Stable Cárdenas of the Cuban Interests Section and singer Luci Murphy read several of Guerrero's poems, in Spanish and English respectively, with accompaniment from musicians Earl Richardson, Lorenz Wheatley, and Joe Kennedy.

Guerrero, who is locked up at the maximum-security federal penitentiary in Florence, Colorado, sent greetings to the event.

The exhibit includes a display case with books and pamphlets on Cuba and the Cuban Five distributed by Pathfinder Press.

Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?

"To think that a socialist revolution in the U.S. is not possible, you would have to believe not only that the ruling families of the imperialist countries and their economic wizards have found a way to 'manage' capitalism. You would also have to close your eyes to the spreading imperialist wars, civil wars, and economic, financial, and social crisis we are in the midst of."

—Mary-Alice Waters
CARACAS, NOVEMBER 2007

Pathfinderpress.com: \$5



Militant/Tom Headley

December 17 evening of art, music, and poetry at Martin Luther King library in Washington, D.C., in support of effort to free five Cuban revolutionaries unjustly held in U.S. prisons. Yanet Stable Cárdenas (inset) from the Cuban Interests Section addressed meeting.

How to see ABC webcast on case of Cuban 5

An ABC News Webcast on the Cuban Five can be viewed on YouTube. The five-minute video, posted to the Web site Dec. 11, 2008, reviews some of the facts about the 10-year incarceration of these five Cuban revolutionaries in U.S. prisons and their fight for freedom. The men were accused of "conspiracy to commit espionage" and other frame-up charges. Their defense attorneys are currently preparing an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. The video can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqkLRMURUw4>.

Greetings to workers behind bars!

In the labor tradition of class solidarity, the *Militant* sends holiday greetings to our sisters and brothers in jail.

The U.S. rulers arrogantly claim to be the foremost defenders of democracy and human rights. Yet the sheer number of people behind bars and the conditions they face expose the reality of life for working people in the most powerful capitalist country on earth. Nearly 2.3 million men and women—one out of every 99 residents of the United States—sit behind bars. More than 3,000 of those incarcerated are on death row, nearly half of them African American.

We salute prisoners Gerardo Hernández, Fernando González, René González, Antonio Guerrero, and Ramón Labañino—known as the Cuban Five—for the example they have set by defending the Cuban Revolution and working-class struggles around the world from their jail cells for the last 10 years. Framed up on charges of “conspiracy to commit espionage,” and in one case, “conspiracy to commit murder,” they were singled out by Washington for monitoring the activities of right-wing Cuban exile groups in Florida that have carried out armed attacks on Cuba with Washington’s blessing. Three of these men—Hernández, Labañino, and Guerrero—face life in prison.

Greetings also to Carlos Alberto Torres, Oscar López Rivera, Haydée Beltrán Torres, and Avelino González Claudio, imprisoned for their activity in support of independence for the U.S. colony of Puerto Rico.

We extend our solidarity to Moisés Mory, former president of United Steelworkers Local 13742 in New Jersey, who remains in jail facing deportation, one of the thousands of workers in this country unjustly jailed by immigration cops.

We also send greetings to framed-up inmates Troy Davis, who is fighting from death row for a new trial; Black rights activist Mumia Abu Jamal, also on death row; Leonard Peltier, a leader of the American Indian Movement; Lex Wotton, sentenced to six years by an Australian court for his part in protests against the police killing of an Aboriginal while in custody; and Fahad Hashmi, a Pakistan-born man framed-up and in a U.S. jail on “terrorism” charges. Hashmi is one of many people in prison today as a result of the U.S. “war on terror,” including the 255 incarcerated at the Guantánamo prison camp.

The capitalist rulers like to think that when they slam the prison doors shut they lock away the ability of prisoners to resist the abuse aimed at dehumanizing and depoliticizing them. Decisive to reinforcing prisoners’ capacity to continue asserting their self-worth is the solidarity they receive from working people on the outside.

We urge all our readers to join the fight to win release for these prisoners. And we invite you to contribute to our Prisoners’ Fund, which makes it possible to send steeply discounted subscriptions to working people behind bars. Send a donation today to the *Militant*, 306 W. 37th St., 10th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

Australian construction workers

Continued from front page
provement Act.

With the aim of driving the unions out of the construction industry, the act made it illegal for workers to strike or take other industrial action without the agreement of their employer.

Even if a worker is killed on site, his workmates must be able to prove they had a reasonable concern about an imminent risk to themselves to legally stop work and assess the safety situation.

The legislation allows the government to deny legal representation to workers and union representatives, and to fine or jail them, as well as authority to secretly record union meetings.

On the eve of the nationwide rallies the commonwealth director of public prosecutions dropped charges against Noel Washington, an official of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU). He had faced six months in jail for refusing to give evidence to the ABCC about what he saw and heard at a meeting of workers in 2007.

In Brisbane the December 2 action against the ABCC took place the day after 25-year-old construction worker Tom Takurau died. A 20-ton beam fell from an overpass and crushed him while he was working on the Eastern Busway site. The beam was not bolted into place.

“The bottom line is the ABCC prevents unions from protecting the rights of workers, and safety is one of those rights,” CFMEU workplace health and safety coordinator Andrew Ramsay told the *Courier-Mail*.

“Today is not just about Noel Washington, today is the first steps of a campaign to eradicate the ABCC,” Australian Manufacturing Workers Union state secretary Steve McCartney told the rally in Perth. “We want to let the ALP [Australian Labor Party] know we are not happy and we won’t be happy until the ABCC is wiped off the face of the earth.”



Militant/Joanne Kuniansky
Construction workers in Sydney, Australia, December 2 march to demand abolition of antiunion Australian Building and Construction Commission.

Hearing for framed-up Troy Davis

Continued from front page

justice system. Are we protecting innocent people or are we protecting the system? This is why we need to abolish the death penalty,” she told the media at an impromptu press conference in the street outside the federal court building. She said the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act should be repealed.

Laura Moya from Georgians for an Alternative to the Death Penalty said that getting this hearing and the turnout of Davis’s supporters is a result of the cumulative effect of what supporters of the case have done.

The judges said the hearing would determine what

was left of the case without the recanted testimony. Thomas Dunn, one of Davis’s attorneys, argued that Stephen Sanders, one of the two witnesses who have not recanted, was not a credible witness. Sanders initially told police that he could not identify the shooter. But during the trial he identified Davis.

Under prodding from Judge Rosemary Baskett, Senior Assistant Attorney General Susan Boleyn admitted that Sanders had not been brought before any line up with other possible suspects.

Judge Stanley Marcus noted that since the trial three witnesses have come forward to implicate Redd Coles, who was at the scene of the fatal shooting. The cops focused on Davis as the suspect after Coles implicated him the day after the killing. Coles is the only other witness who has not recanted his testimony.

The three judges will rule on whether there is enough evidence to grant Davis a new trial. No date has been set for when the panel will issue its ruling.

U.S. troops in Iraq

Continued from front page

withdrawal could be renegotiated, said Odierno. “Three years is a very long time.” The current UN mandate for the more than half-decade-long military operation expired in December.

As a result of Washington’s progress there, insurgent activity has declined. Average monthly U.S. troop fatalities are down this year to 25 per month from an average of about 70 from 2004 to 2007.

Odierno’s statement made at a base north of Baghdad followed an unannounced visit there by Defense Secretary Robert Gates that same day. Gates, chosen by President-elect Barack Obama to remain in his post, had just arrived from a conference in Bahrain where he spoke about U.S. imperialism’s course going into the next presidential administration.

“Anyone who thought that the upcoming months might present opportunities to test the new president would be sorely mistaken,” said Gates at the conference. “President Obama and his national security team, myself included, will be ready to defend the interests of the United States and our friends and allies from the moment he takes office on January 20.”

Gates also expressed concern over the size of the U.S. presence in Afghanistan. The Obama administration plans to send 20,000 additional troops there in 2009.

“I am more mindful than most that with 120,000 troops the Soviets still lost, because they never had the support of the Afghan people,” he said. “I think that after we complete these troop increases that we’re talking about, we ought to think long and hard about how many more go in.”

Gates was referring to the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in 1979 to back a government that had taken power there the previous year. Counterrevolutionary landlord forces backed by Washington succeeded in mobilizing popular opposition to the invasion and the new regime and by 1989 Moscow had withdrawn all its troops.

Deflationary crisis

Continued from page 4

world depression; we’re living through its very opening stages today.

To function effectively as communists in the world situation that is developing, we have to internalize an understanding of imperialism—the stage of world capitalism reached early in the last century. Until the contradictions of that exploitative and oppressive social system are resolved—and that can be achieved only by the proletariat taking power from the capitalists and landlords in the imperialist countries and joining in the worldwide struggle for socialism—humanity has no sure future.

As Lenin helped us learn, for the imperialist rulers “there is no such thing as an absolutely hopeless situation,” even when capitalism is in profound crisis. There is no hopeless situation for the bourgeoisie so long as state power is not wrested from it by the proletariat, led by a revolutionary movement that will not, at the decisive moment, fear the awesome responsibility of assuming power and shrink from taking it. And holding it.

Without such a revolution—without the insurrection that opens the road to workers power—the capitalist state and the employers will wreak devastating enough defeats on the working class through fascist terror, and will destroy enough agricultural and industrial productive capacity through wars as well as economic means that are “natural” (to capitalism) to restart a miserable but real revival of production and trade. They will continue dominating the earth, exploiting and oppressing the great majority of humanity, and threatening the very survival of civilization. So long as they don’t lose state power, the law of value guarantees that their system will start back up. They must only endure; we must conquer.

‘Militant’ publishing schedule

The *Militant* will not publish next week. We will resume publication with the issue dated Jan. 19, 2009, which comes off the press January 8.

Correction

The photo credit for the photo box titled “Pathfinder books well received at Montreal event” in the December 22 issue was incorrect. It should be Luc Paquin.